Protector of aborigines or war criminal: two opposing liberal views of James Brooke

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James Brooke’s adventures in northwest Borneo during the 1840s established him as a hero of Empire.1 Brooke managed what nobody else achieved in the nineteenth century: he created his own independent sovereign state in the jungles of Borneo.2 He described himself politically as a liberal, but not a radical, and dedicated his regime in Sarawak to the advancement of civilisation, free trade, and the protection of Aborigines by ending piracy and establishing a government in their interest.3

Brooke’s supporters argued that Brooke was the personification of liberal imperialism because he demonstrated a desire to civilise the savages, end piracy and advance commerce in Southeast Asia. The influential journalist for The Times, James Augustus St. John argued that ‘to extirpate piracy from the eastern seas is Mr. Brooke’s principle object’ and that pirates ‘impeded the progress of trade’ thereby preventing the commerce ‘destined to carry the comforts and luxuries of civilization into the homes of the wild inhabitants of those vast but unconnected chains of islands’.4 For James Augustus St. John saw Brooke’s campaign as the advancement of civilisation through the dual strategies of commerce and the suppression of piracy.
Yet in January 1850, Louis Alexis Chamerovzow concluded his first pamphlet on James Brooke for the Aborigines’ Protection Society, arguing that there were two Brookes: one a civilizing noble Brooke embodying liberal humanitarian principles, and a more sinister Brooke, who did not desist from war crimes. These two versions, for Chamerovzow, were not only incompatible but the latter, sinister Brooke, had overridden the former liberal version of the man:

His self-imposed mission of introducing civilization amongst the Borneans was a magnificent one; and had he prosecuted a conciliatory policy towards the tribes adverse to his rule, or at enmity with his people, with as much energy, perseverance, and courage, as he has exhibited in gratifying his warlike propensities, and fermenting intestine intrigues for his own advantage, he would have established a legitimate claim upon the admiration and esteem of his countrymen, and erected an imperishable monument to his own honour in the permanent happiness, social advancement, and the Christian enlightenment of the native people.\textsuperscript{5}

Chamerovzow’s statement was in response to the news reaching London of a successful ambush by James Brooke and his allies in the Royal Navy against Dayak ‘pirates’ of the coast of Borneo. The ambush on 31 July 1849, was known as the battle of Bating Maru, and saw an estimated 1000 Iban killed, with some leading liberal figures calling Bating Maru a massacre. The general British ambivalence towards these actions, however, underline a recurring question problem in a liberal empire: what types of force could legitimately be used to create social change in foreign places and among peoples who were not directly subject to British rule?
The question of the legitimate use of power to implement a liberal regime is at the heart of criticisms of nineteenth century liberalism. Uday Singh Mehta’s influential work *Liberalism and Empire*, argues that the internal contradiction between liberalism’s universal view of human existence and the fact that liberalism was a historically and culturally specific construction of Western Europe, meant that liberal thinkers within the British Empire increasingly turned to authoritarian means to implement their agenda. Jennifer Pitts writes a more nuanced interpretation, arguing that as the nineteenth century progressed, liberal thinkers such as James Mill and John Stuart Mill increasingly turned to imperial authority as a means to enforce civilizational development. Although clearly some liberal thinkers (such as the Mills) thought that the cause of social development required aggressive tactics — the use of force to implement civilizational development was contested throughout the nineteenth century. This chapter uses the two views of James Brooke to demonstrate the different elements of nineteenth century liberal ideology and the internal debate within it over the use of military force to achieve the liberal goal of civilizational development.

**Imperial humanitarianism of 1830s**

In his popular account of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, the historian Niall Ferguson compared the imperial humanitarianism of the mid-nineteenth century with that of the eighteenth-century empire: ‘The Victorians had more elevated aspirations. They dreamt not just of ruling the world, but of redeeming it. It was no longer enough for them to exploit other races; now the aim became to improve them’. The late 1830s coincided with an historically important ideological moment in the British Empire, that saw the idea of a civilising mission rise. Driven by a combination of evangelical revival, the activist streak in
utilitarian philosophy, the rationalising arguments of the political economists and an assertive British nationalism, the idea of a civilising mission within and beyond the British Empire matured during this decade. Later in the century, the civilising mission rose to such prominence that it detached from the free trade liberalism of the early nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century the civilising mission had become the overarching key idea that epitomised the dynamics of the nineteenth century with Rudyard Kipling’s summary of the civilising mission as the ‘White man’s burden’ exemplifying this ideal. The notions of civilisation and the civilising mission became integral to the project of liberal imperialism and – in one shape or another – became its ideological backbone.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the idea of a British civilising mission was mostly confined to the arena of anti-slavery, but the 1830s saw the rising power of humanitarian critics of the British Empire, as the anti-slavery movement expanded to include a movement for aboriginal protection. The anti-slavery movement successfully organised for a House of Commons vote abolishing slavery in 1833. Subsequently, one of the movement’s leading protagonists, the parliamentarian Thomas Foxwell Buxton, used parliament to promote the protection of aborigines as one of the defining purposes of the British Empire. Buxton organised for a Select Committee Report into Aborigines in 1836. Buxton and the Secretary for Colonies, Lord Glenelg, were both veterans of the anti-slavery campaigns and part of an influential evangelical group known as the ‘Saints’ or ‘Clapham Sect’ that steered imperial policy towards a civilising mission in the 1830s. One of the outcomes of the Report was the creation of the Aborigines’ Protection Society as a lobby-group advocating colonisation as a means to protect aboriginal interests. Yet this obviously entailed its own problems: what strategies and methods were permissible to employ in the
colonisation process? Who qualified as ‘aborigines’? Who defined and decided that? Against whom or what should these aboriginals then be protected? These questions plagued imperial humanitarian desires throughout the nineteenth century (and continue to plague such desires even today).

James Brooke invoked imperial humanitarianism to gain support for his regime in Sarawak. In 1846, Captain Henry Keppel published parts of Brooke’s diary, in which Brooke described his actions as part of a great humanitarian cause:

To assist is a duty; but in the performance of this duty, to be gentle and feeling is godlike; and probably, between individuals, there is no greater distinction than in this tender sympathy towards distress. Poor, poor Dayaks! Exposed to starvation, slavery, death! You may well raise the warmest feelings of compassion — enthusiasm awakes at witnessing your sufferings! To save men from death has its merit; but to alleviate suffering, to ameliorate all the ills of slavery, to protect these tribes from pillage and yearly scarcity, is far nobler.¹¹

Brooke maintained a similar line in his private correspondence with the British government declaring that his rule was to support the ‘freedom of the aboriginal inhabitants from the oppressions ... exercised on them by the Malay Race’.¹² In his early writings, Brooke lambasted colonial policies in Southeast Asia for not being concerned enough with aborigines. Before he ventured out to Sarawak in 1839 Brooke argued that British colonialism had been neglectful in failing to help or civilise the savages. He especially criticised the aborigines’ protection lobby for neglecting Southeast Asia and proposed an
interventionist approach — if necessary with force — to introduce civilisation and its benefits to the region.\textsuperscript{13}

These unhappy countries have failed to rouse attention or excite commiseration, and as they sink lower and lower, they afford a striking proof of how civilization may be crushed, and how the fairest and richest lands under the sun may become degraded by a continuous course of oppression and misrule.\textsuperscript{14}

Brooke and his followers argued that Britain had a duty to protect and civilise people. Stamford Raffles had originally promoted the idea of imperial protection in the region, but Brooke developed it even further. Brooke and his apologist supporters capitalised on the romantic idea of empire that Raffles had propagated. In his writings, Brooke presented the colonisation of Sarawak in Borneo as the historical culmination of the native protection scheme that Raffles had advocated, whilst Brooke’s supporters consistently portrayed Brooke as a new Raffles who would rekindle British interest(s) in the region. This appeal to British protective humanitarianism thus began the year before Brooke sailed for Southeast Asia in 1839. In his 1838 essay on the objectives of colonisation in Southeast Asia, Brooke argued that the purpose of colonisation should be the ‘development of native resources’ and the acknowledgement of the ‘indefeasible rights of the Aborigines’.\textsuperscript{15} He committed himself to ‘conciliate the good opinion’ of the ‘aboriginal inhabitants’, and discover their racial origins.\textsuperscript{16} The latter was not only an expression of innocuous scholarly curiosity or a desire to gain renown in the metropole by following in the tradition of former scholar-administrators like Marsden Raffles and Crawfurd.\textsuperscript{17} It can be seen as part of a quest to
determine the composition of the ‘aboriginal inhabitants’ in the various parts of the region and distinguish them from those deemed to be later immigrants or invaders.

Brooke’s project went beyond the mere scholarly classificatory account of the peoples of Southeast Asia. Instead, he made moral and political divisions by stipulating those who were perceived as aboriginal, which in the 1830s meant autochthonous peoples (or people whose origins could not be determined and hence must be a unique creation). As autochthonous people, the aboriginal tribes seemingly possessed an original right to the land, and subsequent people, such as Malays, Arabs, and Chinese could be labelled as latecomers endowed with less legitimacy to possess land and political power. These activities promised not only to promote British interests in Southeast Asia but also to uphold the new humanitarian purpose of imperialism that had gained currency during the 1830s.

Brooke’s goals could have come directly out of the Aborigines’ Protection Societies own publications. In their Outline of a Proposed Code, the society declared ‘In order permanently to benefit and promote the civilisation of the aborigines, it is necessary to obtain, by peaceful means, as soon as possible, moral and political influence over them’. Such beliefs by the Aborigines’ Protection Society actively supported the colonisation of aboriginal peoples if colonisation was deemed in the interests of promoting civilisation amongst the Aboriginal population.

In addition to the humanitarian focus of British power in the 1840s, Brooke’s desire to protect aborigines harked back to deep-rooted historical legitimisations of colonialism in South-East Asia and formed part of the more recent idea of a reforming liberal policy. The
idea of reforming natives by advancing them up the stage of civilisation, was a recurring theme in late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century British colonial thought in South-East Asia. Although Raffles popularised some of these beliefs, we could equally list George Forrest or Francis Light from the eighteenth century as early proponents of the use of colonies to reform the societies of Southeast Asia and reform its peoples.\(^{21}\) In contrast to the enthusiasm expressed by the men on the spot, higher authorities in British India and London usually dismissed these ideas of civilising reform – favouring instead more restrictive policies which limited colonial expenditure, balanced payments and extracted as much revenue as possible. Brooke argued that territorial possession was necessary to reverse such retrograde dynamics and reform a society. He argued that the acquisition of territory was the only means of protecting the indigenous populations of Southeast Asia from their own rulers and advancing their individual civilisations.

Yet we barely have to read much between the lines to find tensions and contradictions in Brooke’s argument. For example, in his 1838 essay he simultaneously advocated ‘indefeasible rights of the aborigines’ and their ‘self-government’, and while in the same article stressed that territorial possession by Europeans of their aboriginal land was crucial to achieving the goal of ‘self-government’. Brooke seems to have been aware of this contradiction, which may have been he was emphatic in his assertion that that colonial rule should exist for the benefit of aboriginal people and not for Europeans nor Malays, Arabs or Chinese.

By December 1841, Brooke believed he had developed a new vision of territorial possession that would resolve some of the contradictions inherent in his 1839 essay. He argued that
territorial possession should not be by conquest or occupation, but rather protection and rule through existing native institutions. He explained his ideas as an ‘experiment of developing a country’ through the residency of a minimal number of Europeans who govern with the ‘assistance of native rulers’. 22 The principle virtue of this system, he believed, was that it maintained the independence of the indigenous elites:

Above all it insures the independence of the native princes, and may advance the inhabitants further in the scale of civilization, by means of this very independence, than can be done when the government is a foreign one, and their natural freedom sacrificed.23

Brooke believed that leaving compliant native princes and traditional forms of government intact was a new system of territorial possession that corresponded to the humanitarian impulse of the time. In reality, his ideas were a development of British practices of indirect rule developed in India, whereby a British Resident advised and controlled the local native rulers in economic development.24 The only distinction was that he proposed taking up the mantle of traditional rule himself – becoming a Rajah.

In his narrative, empire became a noble duty of protection for Brooke the individual and the British people more generally. Brooke presented the territorial expansion of the British Empire as a humanitarian necessity to protect the innocent savage.
Reforming the degraded state and cultural identity of Southeast Asia

As Rajah of Sarawak, Brooke went about reforming what he argued was a degraded state. This posed challenges to the civilising mission: how to stop further degeneration; and how to break the lethargy of stagnation and introduce progress from the very onset. These challenges called for other modes of rule, other attitudes towards the peoples and other state formations in the region. In diagnosing this state of affairs, Brooke concluded that piracy was an endemic problem in Borneo and that it needed to be crushed.

In his 1839 essay, Brooke reiterated Raffles’ idea of Malay degeneration brought about by colonialism by non-British Europeans. He believed that Malay governments were in a process of ‘internal dissension’ that ‘destroyed all rightful authority’ over their own people and the aboriginal Dayak tribes of the interior and had ‘given rise to petty states, which thrive on piracy and fatten on the slave trade’.25 His views therefore presented piracy and slavery as aberrations in Borneo’s society and the consequence of Europeans weakening the internal fabric of Malay polities rather than representing the original state in region or innate qualities of its peoples.

In his 1841 memorandum and again in his 1846 memorandum, Brooke presented the Malays as practising a form of economic predation on the aboriginal Dayaks, thereby stimulating Dayak barbarism. The system Brooke described saw the interior ‘Dayak’ tribes suppling the coastal ‘Malay’ tribes with rice, whilst the coastal tribes in turn, supplied the interior with manufactured goods gained from international trade. Brooke noted however that rice harvests were often totally consumed by the coastal Malays, leaving the Dayak cultivators in the interior to starve.26 Malays did dispatch goods to the interior they
expected that Dayak chiefs would pay on delivery, by sending rice and forest goods back to
the coast. Yet the prices demanded by Malay *pengirans* (regents) for their rice was often
more than the Dayaks were able to pay.

Failure to pay, resulted in the Malays subcontracting the debt ridden Serebas and Sakarran
Dayaks (collectively known by Brooke as the Sea Dayaks) to launch punitive headhunting-
raids which plundered the other Dayak tribes of the interior and seized women and children
as slaves. Brooke claimed that ‘of the twenty Dayak tribes under this [Sarawak] government
more than half have been robbed of their wives and children in part; and one tribe is
without women or children amongst them’. 27

The biggest act of barbarism that the Malays had performed on the Dayaks, Brooke
believed, was piracy which, in his controversial definition, included these headhunting raids.
He saw the actions of the Malays as facilitating barbarism amongst the Dayaks and
interpreted the taking of women and children as slaving raids. The taking of women as
hostages to extract further payment from the Dayaks and as wives for the Malays and the
coastal Dayak communities was part of normal customs of tribal war in Sarawak. However,
for British readers, such practices equated to slavery – and for those who supported
Brooke’s approach it was piracy too.

Brooke told the British Government and the public that his subjects were on the threshold
of civilisation. They were good honest people ‘desirous to suppress piracy, to encourage
trade and to cultivate the mostly friendly relations with the British’. 28 Brooke used the word
civilisation to legitimise his punitive action against his local enemies in Borneo. Although
acts of piracy could easily be portrayed as uncivilised, Brooke was faced with a contradiction in his own logic – he admitted these ‘piratical excursions’ could also be labelled ‘inter-tribal war’ and hence represent a seemingly normal state of affairs in the region in which neither the British state nor Brooke as a private individual could legitimately interfere. 29

These ideas were pressed by Brooke in his 31 March 1845 memorandum on Piracy in the Eastern Seas for the British Government. 30 In this memorandum, he outlined his policy towards the people that he defines as pirates and why his policy should become British Government policy.

His ideas were still in line with the beliefs of the Aborigines’ Protection Society that wrote in its code:

That in future, no nation or tribe of the aborigines, of any pretence whatever, shall in any case be excited or encouraged to go to war with a neighbouring tribe or nation, or commit any act of aggression whatever; but on the contrary, the British agent shall exert himself to procure an extensive, organized, and pacific coalition of the several tribes under British influence and mediation. 31

This policy, however, posed more questions than it provided answers, especially given that it did not stipulate how British influence should be exerted, just that it should result in an enforced peace between the tribes. The controversies that followed in the wake of Brooke’s sanguine actions especially after 1849 provide probably the most emblematic instance of the tensions inherent in these high-minded but — perhaps intentionally — vaguely stipulated principles.
Brooke advocated a policy of ‘conciliation with punishments’ that recognised Malay governments, whilst destroying pirate communities, that refused to renounce piracy. To teach a ‘severe lesson’ was a phrase often used in the texts written by Brooke and published by his followers. Brooke advocated a government policy change from one of policing the oceans, looking for pirate ships, to one of seeking out the communal basis of piracy. His methods advocated the total destruction of communities that he deemed ‘piratical’:

I would especially urge that, to eradicate the evil, the pirate-haunts must be burned and destroyed, and the communities dispersed; for merely to cruise against pirate-prahus, and to forbear attacking them until we see them commit a piracy, is a hopeless and an endless task, harassing to our men, and can be attended with but very partial and occasional success; whereas, on the contrary principle, what pirate would venture to pursue his vocation if his home be endangered – if he be made to feel in his own person the very ills he inflicts upon others.

The above statement was a clear body of ideas designed to persuade the Government to pursue an aggressive policy of attacking villages and creating social change in Southeast Asia through overwhelming force. The problem for Brooke was that piracy in a legal sense was something that occurred in the open waters, whereas he was advocating attacks on land-based communities. In so doing, he was stretching the boundaries of what the British government had until then considered piracy.
Pirates, Brooke argued, represented entire ‘communities’ that raided other communities as well as raiding ships and small vessels that ventured in the shallow coastal waters and up the creeks of Borneo. He believed that there were three types of pirates. The first made ‘long voyages in large heavy-armed prahus, such as the ilanunu, Balagnini (sea Gypsies) etc’.

These pirates operated on the High Seas (what today we would call international waters). The second groups of pirates consisted of ‘Dayak fleets, which make short but destructive excursions in swift prahus, and seek to surprise rather than openly to attack their prey’. These pirates operated in the shallows and mainly attacked other native prahus.

The final group consisted of people living in large settlements who were led by pirate chiefs:

- half-bred Arab Seriffs, who, possessing themselves of the territory of some Malay state, form a nucleus for piracy, a rendezvous and market for all the roving fleets;
- and although occasionally sending out their own followers, they more frequently seek profit by making advances, in food, arms and gunpowder, to all who will agree to repay them at an exorbitant rate in slaves.

All of these groups were part of large communities in which Brooke identified piracy as integral to the economic fabric of the community and the region. Nevertheless, these pirate communities created a state of endemic crime and distress throughout the region, to such an extent, that the sovereign governments such as the ‘old established Malay Governments (such as Borneo and Sooloo)’, according to Brooke, were either ‘participators, in or victims to piracy, and in many cases both – purchasing from one set of pirates and enslaved and plundered by another’.
Brooke’s ideas for reform were all based on the idea that Borneo and the Malay world more broadly, were in a state of decay. The region, he said, was both gripped by political decay and possessed aboriginal tribes, who had, until recently, lived in relatively pristine conditions but were now subject to the debasing maladies of this decay. In the midst of this decay, Sarawak fitted the civilising mindset that appealed to the British public in the mid-century. Brooke appealed to the belief that the British Empire had a responsibility to protect the Dayaks of Sarawak. Few would disagree with him. However, what was unclear to his British detractors was what does ‘protect’ mean in the context of inter-tribal conflict in an autonomous region? Who should be protected and against whom? And what means were considered effective and permittable in the name of providing such protection? If creating conciliation between warring tribes through peaceable means was not possible, could force then be used to punish the aggressor? Brooke certainly believed so, and between 1842 and July 1849 few humanitarians questioned Brooke’s actions and he received great applause from all sides of the British public.

Brooke’s actions at Betting Maru, however, constituted a turning point that changed perceptions of him and his actions and would radically reframe the political narrative of his entire civilising project. From being a liberal imperial hero who championed the humanitarian cause and brought civilisation to the furthest corners of the world, Brooke now remerged in the eyes of many liberals as an unscrupulous villain who shied away from nothing in his quest for fame and personal gain. He was, in short, culpable of what amounted to what we today would call ‘war crimes’. This discrepancy in the assessments of Brooke’s motives and methods reveals the existence of some fundamental fault lines within
the liberal views on how imperial space could be framed, imperial rule legitimised and imperial governance implemented.

**Brooke the war criminal**

The critique against Brooke and his allies came in two stages. The first stage was limited to questioning the veracity of the testimonies given by naval officers in their too extravagant claims for “head-money” paid for each slain or dispersed enemy, and to which they saw themselves as legally entitled according to existing British law. These questions were first raised by Richard Cobden, Joseph Hume and other Radicals in the British parliament. Outside of parliament, the Radicals also gained support from the Aborigines’ Protection Society and the Peace Society. The second stage was the public campaign explicitly directed against Brooke and led by Joseph Hume. Hume used parliament as a venue to make broad calls to establish a Commission of Inquiry into abuses of power by James Brooke as honorary Consul to Brunei. Such commissions of inquiry were almost standard procedure during the first half of the nineteenth century whenever a colonial scandal involving alleged abuses of power threatened to blow up and become unmanageable. These commissions facilitated what Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford calls a ‘more orderly accumulation of knowledge through legal inquiry’, and resulted in a specific legally binding genre — the commissioners’ report. These reports contained detailed documentation and a thorough analysis of ethnographic material considered relevant in determining legal issues in colonial and international contexts.
At first glance, the personal and vitriolic nature of the debate in the press and the British parliament can easily blind observers to the real issues the Radicals raised in their criticisms of Brooke. Contemporary defenders of Brooke claimed Cobden and Hume were besmirching his good and noble character. Until the 1970s many historians had followed in this fashion, with most being quasi apologists for Brooke. Such views reduce these crucial nineteenth century ideological differences to a question of mere personality. The clear moral and material objections to colonial expansion into Southeast Asia provided by Brooke’s opponents were lost in such historical interpretations.

Even though Hume’s and other radicals attacks on Brooke’s policy cannot be detached from narrower political and party rivalries, they ought not be dismissed as mere personal animosities as they are in many of the secondary sources which argue that Brooke’s detractors, such as Hume, Cobden or Chamerovzow were not themselves present at the scenes of action and therefore their criticism are nothing but unfounded malicious slander. Such an approach would leave us with a one-sided and distorted impression of how Britain’s role in this region was envisioned in mid-nineteenth contemporary thought. In addition, it tends to obfuscate the importance of ideological systems and – at a more elevated level – imperial imaginaries in delineating the desired British policies in the region and more fundamentally in conceptualising its inhabitants, their societal formations, their history and future potential.

News of the operation against the Saribas and Sekrang Dayaks at Bating Maru first reached Britain in late October 1849. The Daily News was one of the first British papers to convey reports of the operation from the Singapore Times. The Daily News’ article followed the
reporting practices of the 1840s, which rarely questioned the legitimacy of punitive anti-piracy expeditions. The paper was supportive of the need to suppress piracy, maintaining that ‘the punishment inflicted on these fierce barbarians had been most complete’. Nevertheless, a change was in the air: The Examiner (for which John Crawfurd wrote) took a much more critical line towards British actions, calling the attack a ‘dreadful slaughter of pirates’.

However, nothing further happened until the more comprehensive Straits Times report arrived in late November 1849. It was soon republished in all the London dailies. The account was glowing in its praise for Brooke, and also condemned the Dayak savages for depravities towards their captives. In its triumphalist tenor, the article was much more graphic in its depiction of the one-sided nature of the conflict, something which unintentionally sowed the seeds for later criticism:

Of 120 prahu which it is said started on the expedition, and all of which were in the bay the preceding evening, more than 87 were destroyed, and the loss of life on their side must have been immense — indeed, it has been placed as high as 1,200 men. On our part, saving a few slight casualties, all were unscathed.

The above account was the first description of the slaughter of Dayaks published in British newspapers that depicted paddle steamers chopping bodies to pieces. The account made clear the immense disparity in technology, with of rockets and cannons on one side against spears and swords on the other. Such descriptions left many humanitarians wondering if the ‘battle’ had been more like a massacre.
On December 6, Cobden wrote a long letter to his colleague John Bright reflecting the moral indignation of the humanitarians over Brooke’s escapades in Borneo:

> It shocks me to think what fiendish atrocities may be committed by English arms without rousing any conscientious resistance at home, provided they be only far enough off, and the victims too feeble to trouble us with their remonstrances [sic] or groans.\(^\text{50}\)

Cobden’s focus was on the apathy of the public. He articulated this indignation in the form of a normative argument, replete with religious overtones: ‘We as a nation have an awful retribution in store for us for wicked deeds’.\(^\text{51}\)

The massacre of Dayaks was clearly a moral issue for Cobden. In the *Manchester Times*, he accused Brooke of exacting ‘unsparing vengeance and exterminating violence’ on the Dayaks ‘simply because they have not emerged from the lowest state of barbarism’.\(^\text{52}\)

Cobden went as far as accusing Brooke of ‘horrid butchery’ and attempting to ‘exterminate the tribes’ and the action being a disgrace to Britain’s advocacy of ‘peace and humanity’ throughout the world.\(^\text{53}\) Such evocative and emotional highly strung rhetoric reflected the discursive strategies employed in most humanitarian writing. Driven by their desire for bringing about immediate changes, humanitarian reformers felt themselves both obliged to and justified in focusing on the corporal suffering of the aborigines. This often meant emphasising the goriest details of punitive or aggressive actions against the aborigines caused by European armed forces or white colonisers. By emphasising the gore and
characterising the action as a massacre, the humanitarians were attempting to appeal to the sensibility of the metropolitan audience who did not like reading of these actions in the morning papers while they were trying to enjoy their breakfast. Such appeals to public decency were perceived by the humanitarians as the most efficient way to arouse public action.54

On the 30 January 1850, the Aborigines’ Protection Society met to discuss the issue at Cobden’s urging. Cobden had proposed a ‘public and solemn protest’ of both the Peace Society and Aborigines’ Protection Society.55 Before the meeting, Louis Alexis Chamerovzow, the Secretary of the Aborigines’ Protection Society’s, wrote a 47-page special issue of The Colonial Intelligencer; or, Aborigines’ Friend on ‘Rajah Brooke and the Massacres off Borneo’. Chamerovzow clearly outlined in the argument that Brooke was a war criminal. His pamphlet opens with the statement:

We use the word massacre, with a full knowledge of its import. It means “murder; indiscriminate destruction of human life.” We use it, because it is the only word we can use; the only one which the character of the transaction we have to record will permit us to use. To employ any other world be to rob language of its signification: to clothe truth in the garb of falsehood.56

Massacre was the catch-all phrase in the nineteenth century for events that today would be described as at best mass murder or at worst genocide.57 As Chamerovzow notes, he was not using it lightly, with the massacre being ‘another blood-bedabbled page has been added to our crime-stained Colonial History. Once more have Christianity and Civilization been
foully calumniated, and their names converted into war-cries.\textsuperscript{58} What angered the Aborigines Protection society more than anything else was that Brooke actually claimed to commit these acts in the name of humanity:

Sir James Brooke, who commanded the perpetration of the huge wickedness, as a paragon of humanity and the promoter of civilization; and to brand as slanderers and liars the men who may possess sufficient moral courage to denounce such deeds as inconsistent with every received principle of humanity and civilisation.\textsuperscript{59}

Not himself being present at the sites of violent confrontation, Chamerovzow’s essay used the writings of Brooke and his supporters to forensically demonstrate that Brooke had deliberately massacred tribes that were resistant to his regime. Gleaning these pro-Brooke texts for incriminating internal evidence against their authors was a frequently used methodological \textit{modus operandi} among Brooke’s detractors given that, with few exceptions, all the first-hand accounts published on these matters were written by Brooke and his allies.\textsuperscript{60}

The distance in space from the actual actions did not, however, diminish the historical value of the anti-Brooke texts if assessed within their political and intellectual contexts. These texts had a significant impact, both as polemical documents within a highly politicised context and, more broadly, as ideological vehicles expressing of ideas about the configurations of an imperial world order, influencing definitions of sovereignty in the region, extra-European inter-societal relations and the ‘right’ format of the civilising mission. These anti-Brooke texts were instrumental in framing the discussion, by deeming which
issues were relevant in determining the morality and legality of Brooke’s policies as well as by conceptualising the region and placing its history within an encompassing historical narrative of imperial expansion and progress and thus delineating possible trajectories of Britain’s colonial aspirations and obligations.

Chamerovzow and the protection society saw in Brooke a glowing example of the problem that plagued humanitarianism in the mid-nineteenth century. Imperialists were using civilisation and humanity as arguments to justify aggressive territorial colonial expansion. According to Chamerovzow, this colonial expansion resulted in major abuses of power and the deaths of thousands of aboriginal peoples. What Chamerovzow, Cobden and Hume argued was that Brooke should not be rewarded for these actions; rather he should be prosecuted for murder. But the methods of achieving this were few; one option was a Commission of enquiry into Brookes depravities.

Adjudicating the two James Brookes: Commission of Inquiry

The opportunity appeared in 1852 with the establishment of a new government that relied on the Radicals’ support to pass legislation through the House of Commons. Hume’s and Cobden’s lobbying finally paid off and they got their Commission of Inquiry. Hume requested that the Inquiry should focus exclusively on piracy and whether Brooke had violated any acts of parliament or the treaty of friendship between Britain and Borneo. However, in order to determine these questions, Hume asked for the Commission to undertake a detailed study of the ethnology of Northern Borneo regarding their alleged piratical proclivities, calling for the commissioners to:
Carefully distinguish between the inter-tribal head-hunting feuds of the Dyaks [sic] who have been attacked by Sir James Brooke.... What was the evidence and precautions taken ... to ascertain that such persons really were pirates before they were attacked.... To obtain correct descriptions of the boats belonging to the Dayaks who were attacked, information of their tonnage, dimensions, and number on each occasion, the number of men on board of them respectively, the descriptions and extent of the fire-arms and other-warlike instruments, which they were supplied, the nature and degree of resistance they offered.... To procure the fullest information of the number and extent (if any) of the towns, villages, and houses belonging to the Dayaks which have been burned, destroyed, or injured by Sir James Brooke.... To ascertain with accuracy the number, names and position in life of the Dayaks who were taken prisoner by Sir James Brooke.61

Hume’s questions derived from many of the lines of argument that Crawfurd had raised earlier in his anonymous articles in *The Examiner*.62 Although Hume had previously raised the problem of Brooke’s legal status as Rajah of Sarawak, he gave it very little thought in the suggested Inquiry. He did however request that the Commission should explore the ‘manner in which, the late Sultan of Borneo was induced to enter into, and conclude any, and what negotiations whatever with Sir James Brooke respecting the territory of Sarawak’. 63 Despite Hume’s focus on the question of piracy, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Earl of Clarendon (George Villiers) did not focus primarily on piracy but rather on determining the exact the legal status of Brooke as both as Raja of Sarawak and Governor of Labuan and consul to Brunei:
The first question to which the Commissioners will have to direct their inquiries is, whether the position of Sir James Brooke in Sarawak, either as holding the possession of the Sultan of Borneo, or, as he now alleges, as an independent Rajah, holding it by the free choice of the people, be compatible with his duties as British Consul-General and Commissioner for Trade, and with his character of a British subject.

With reference to this portion of the inquiry, it is to be observed that by no act of Her Majesty’s Government has countenance ever been given to Sir James Brooke’s assumption of independence, and that his possession of Sarawak has never been considered otherwise by them than as a private grant bestowed by a foreign Sovereign upon a British subject.64

Brooke had seized the opportunity to gain a fresh title to Sarawak from Sultan Omar Alli in the aftermath of the British attack on Brunei in July 1846, which Brooke had been instrumental in staging and executing. His new title did not stipulate any ongoing tribute and therefore it could be interpreted as if Brooke possessed a de facto sovereignty of Sarawak – a development that the British Government was not aware of until 1852.65 This potentially sovereign legal status meant that Brooke had a potential conflict of interest in his capacity as a British Commissioner for Trade in Brunei. Consequently, Clarendon requested that the Royal Commission should address the issue of Brooke’s conflict of interest, as both an individual trader and Commissioner for Trade. Finally, the commission was to look at the sensitive issue of piracy and decide if Brooke ‘should be entrusted with a discretion to determine which of those tribes are piratical’.66
The issue of piracy thus constituted one of the most important issues addressed by the Commission. In practice, this meant that particular attention was devoted to examining whether the so-called Sea Dayaks, against whom Brooke had unleashed repeated campaigns (in 1843, 1844 and 1849), could justly be denounced as pirates in a legal sense according to the British and international laws in force then. This question was essential when determining the legality, desirability and indeed the very morality of the sanguine expeditions launched by Brooke with the assistance of the Royal Navy.

The question of the perceived piracy of the Sea Dayaks represented much more than just a judicial matter; it also involved considerations on political exigency and opportunism in relation to British interests in the region. The question of piracy also addressed concerns regarding how the civilising mission could best be implemented and the humanitarian cause advanced. As noted by legal historian Alfred Rubin, the notion of a ‘piratical character’ found a much wider use in this context than warranted by existing legal decisions. The broad use of the term ‘pirate’ was realised in the actions of British naval officers like Keppel and Farquhar who – at the informal behest of Brooke – seemed to prefer annihilating those native people who allegedly and possibly illegally interfered with seaborne commerce (which primarily related to native commerce rather than European) rather than capturing them and bringing them before a British court who could try their case.

The punitive actions by Keppel, Farquhar and Brooke epitomised the true meaning of the phrase “a severe lesson” and represented as we have seen a deliberate strategy. Brooke had publicly announced this in his memorandum on piracy. In it he stressed how “we must
carefully avoid introducing the refinements of European international law amongst a rude and semi-civilised people, who will make our delicacy a cloak for crime”.69

Even if acts of violence committed by Sea Dayaks could be classified as piratical, then other, just as pertinent, questions remained. Were acts of piracy attributable to entire communities from whence the expeditions had been launched, or was it those individuals who positively could be proven to be guilty of the crime of piracy on the high seas who were this category? Only if the first question was answered in the affirmative — that all societal support structures for pirates were considered equally responsible for pirates — could punitive expeditions be considered a legitimate countermeasure to piracy.

Yet this contested issue seemed to defy all written definitions of piracy. It has to be remembered that in combating piracy the Law of Nations constituted just one of several sources of legitimacy. Naval authority could also be derived from bilateral treaties, principles of self-defence, or be part of routine peace-keeping within the imperial sphere of control and its vicinities.70 This, obviously, often left ample room for the naval officers on the spot to act as they saw fit, invoke municipal law (rather than the law of nations), which usually gave these officers leeway in defining what acts constituted piracy and whether those committing such acts were supported by their villages which thus became legitimate targets too.71

Brooke’s solution to piracy was, he claimed, rooted in the Law of Nations, for it seemed to presuppose the existence of ‘piratical communities’ that not only lay beyond the spatial reach of law but also beyond the conceptual realm of law. His approach implied that such communities were non-state entities and should not be regarded as partaking in the rights
and obligations contained in the Law of Nations. He deemed the ‘pirate communities’ to be lawless in the deepest sense of the word and de facto enemies of all nations. According to the American jurist James Kent – whom Brooke often referred to as the legal authority on issues regarding piracy—this meant that:

[F]or though pirates may form a loose and temporary association among themselves, and re-establish in some degree those laws of justice which they have violated with the rest of the world, yet they are not considered as a national body, or entitled to the laws of war as one of the community of nations.73

Yet, opinions were divided on the very possibility of the existence of such piratical communities beyond the realm of law. Even if one, following Amadeo Policante’s approach, assumes that this definition of the pirate as “hostis humani generis” (Latin for ‘enemy of the human race’) was hegemonic, almost unanimously accepted and universally applied during the heyday of British informal imperialism, it nonetheless contained internal frictions in its definitions and demarcations of the human community. In the natural law tradition, this definitorial slippage, implied that combating pirates could never be an act of war, not even when they supposedly existed as some kind of community.74 Rather combating pirates was branded by Brooke as policing the seas in compliance with the security paradigms inherent in the ideology of liberal imperialism.75 Given that a complete absence of legitimacy and any political status followed being categorised as pirates,76 men on the spot like Brooke could deploy violence in an international setting under the cloak of suppressing piracy and thus circumvent domestic political resistance within Britain to waging war and expanding the British Empire further.77
Brookes' description of piratical 'communities' as consisting of loose and temporary associations did not fit very well with the actual situation in and around Borneo. It required some sartorial dexterity to tailor it so it could be applied, for instance, to the Sea Dayaks. The notion of 'piratical communities' inhabiting the rivers and coasts of Borneo in fact owed much more to ethnological categorization than to legal subtleties. Issues regarding Dayak entitlement to sovereignty as a societal body were primarily embedded in discussions on geographical determinism and stadial progress of civilisation.

Brooke did not consider that piracy — as referring to either an individual crime or an inherent societal characteristic — to be mutually exclusive. Rather he presented them as two extremes on a gradual and dynamic scale that people progressed up with the introduction of (colonial) order and the penetration of the civilising mission. Thanks to his own interventionist policies, 'piracy would dwindle from the crime of communities to the crime of individuals and gradually be extinguished'. From this perspective, punitive expeditions against entire 'piratical communities' followed as a natural and necessary next step from policing the seas. Such expeditions eradicated a lawless anomaly, and as a result, they 'normalised' affairs by transforming piracy from being an endemic and societal trait to an episodic and individual exception. To those who – like Hume, Cobden and Chamerowzov – strongly opposed the policies pursued by Brooke, and facilitated by his allies amongst Royal Navy officers on the spot, this represented little more than unwarranted, inhumane and indiscriminate massacres that merited nothing but the severest opprobrium.

The Senior Commissioner was Charles Prinsep the Advocate-General of Bengal, who behaved erratically during the course of the Commission and on his return to Bengal was
certified as insane. The second Commissioner was Humphrey Devereux, a longstanding officer in the Bengal Civil Service. Brooke initially rejoiced at the idea of the Commission, believing it would focus on the issue of piracy and he could easily discount Hume’s and the humanitarians’ accusations. However, after reading the terms of reference, he decided it was a political witch-hunt, calling it a Commission based on ‘false instructions’ and a ‘positive wrong from [the] government’.

Much of the questioning by the Commission focused on distinguishing between piratical activities, peaceful trade and legitimate conflict. When addressing Europeans, the questions attempted to establish if the witnesses could tell the difference between the different tribes they encountered, or the difference between war prows (prahus) and trading prows. When William Napier (the former Governor of Labuan, dismissed by Brooke in 1851) was questioned on 29 September 1854, he was asked: have you ‘satisfied your mind as to the piratical or intertribal character of the predatory expeditions of the Saribas and Sekrang Dayaks?’ Napier’s answer was:

I have no doubt that the Dayaks have inter-tribal wars, and long standing feuds, and that these feuds and inter-tribal wars are the origin of many of their expeditions against each other, that their expeditions may also combine piracy by attacking the smaller trading prows they fall in with, I also think highly probable.

Napier’s evidence highlighted the general problem the enquiry faced. Were the Dayaks motivated by tribal war or piracy and how could you tell the difference? In Napier’s evidence, the motive was inter-tribal wars, and any act of piracy was merely opportunistic and not the direct motivation. When the Commission questioned other non-European inhabitants of Borneo they asked the question ‘Do you know anything of the Saribas and Sekrang Dayaks?’ and usually got the response in the affirmative and a long statement of how they attack villages.

Although the local accounts were horrendous, such attacks on villages were not necessarily piracy but could rather be seen as legitimate inter-tribal war that Britain had no business getting involved with, as Napier’s evidence and the long commentary in parliament by
Cobden, Hume and other radicals demonstrated. Consequently, the Commissioners needed to assess if these acts constituted piracy or legitimate warfare. Napier argued that there was some feud or disagreement at the source of the Saribas and Sekrang expeditions. In legal terms, this would amount to a casus belli (cause of war); therefore when questioning the natives of Borneo the Commissioners inquired into such a possible cause. For example, on 16 October 1854, they asked Mohamot Sally ‘What is the general character of these attacks, were they provoked?’ He responded: ‘No cause or bad feeling, their object is only to get head and plunder’. Similarly, on the same day the Commissioners questioned Hajji Mahomet Sahat asking ‘what was the cause of offence given?’ he responded: ‘There was no cause but a mere desire to obtain heads.’ In his analysis of the evidence, Devereux noted the ‘attacks were all on one side’ and that there is a unanimous declaration that no cause of offence has been given.

By focusing on cause or the lack of cause, the commissioners were trying to establish the legitimacy of the attack. The evidence they received from the people of Borneo was that there was no legitimate reason for the Saribas and Sekrang attacks and the only reason for doing so was to plunder the people. Although still not the normal definition of piracy, the focus on plunder without cause meant the actions of the Saribas and Sekrang Dayaks had according to Prinsep ‘nothing of the character of intertribal warfare’ and therefore were closer to piracy than they were to inter-tribal war. Nevertheless Prinsep concluded that it is ‘in my opinion neither necessary nor prudent that he [Brooke] should be entrusted by the British Crown with any discretion to determine which of these tribes are piratical’.

When the Commission concluded, it failed to give an answer that satisfied either the liberal critics of Brooke or even Brooke’s supporters. The Commission exonerated Brooke of accusations of misusing his Public Office of Consul to Brunei to support his private empire in Sarawak, yet decided that his position as ruler of Sarawak was incompatible with holding an official British position — a decision that gave the British government enough expediency to politically treat the Brooke regime any way they wished.
The Commissioners did not agree on the most important problem for the British government: whether or not Brooke was the sovereign ruler of Sarawak. The senior Commissioner, Prinsep concluded that Brooke was still ‘a vassal of the Sultan of Brunei’ whilst the other commissioner Humphrey Devereux maintained that Brooke carried the will of the people of Sarawak in a revolution against Brunei. Both commissioners supported Brooke’s claim that the Saribas and Sekrang Dayaks were pirates and therefore legitimate targets. Nevertheless, although agreeing with Brooke, they seriously addressed the premise that the Dayaks were at the same time also engaged in conducting inter-tribal war.

Conclusion:

The Commission failed to resolve the tension between the two interpretations of liberalism. Brooke’s murderous intervention was justified on the grounds that he was policing piracy. Yet both the spatial and conceptual boundaries of that policy action were, perhaps deliberately, left undefined. The commission however ruled that these expeditions against ‘piratical communities’ should not continue to be requested by people like Brooke who had a vested political interest in their outcome. Consequently, the Commission provided convenient political solutions, but they did not offer any consistent answers to the fundamental problems of distinguishing piracy in Southeast Asia from other, legitimate modes of violent conflict and delineating Britain’s future role in monitoring and curbing piracy when they were not directly involving British interests.

As a historical figure, Brooke personifies the problems with liberal humanitarianism. By the mid nineteenth century liberal humanitarianism had become so broad that to introduce social change and create a liberal social order, heavy handed military intervention was a legitimate option in the minds of many self-professed liberals. This was the view Brooke
took in attempting to bring political stability to an unruly region. Yet his actions were in total contravention of the principles he espoused. We opened with Chamerovzow’s statement on the duality of Brooke:

His self-imposed mission of introducing civilization amongst the Borneans was a magnificent one; and had he prosecuted a conciliatory policy towards the tribes adverse to his rule, or at enmity with his people, with as much energy, perseverance, and courage, as he has exhibited in gratifying his warlike propensities, and fermenting intestine intrigues for his own advantage, he would have established a legitimate claim upon the admiration and esteem of his countrymen, and erected an imperishable monument to his own honour in the permanent happiness, social advancement, and the Christian enlightenment of the native people.88

Chamerovzow’s characterisation of Brooke continues to haunt the idea of liberal humanitarian intervention. There was no single liberal approach to empire, the use of violence to implement social change in the empire or to the use of military force to extend its borders or spheres of influence. Continuing the suppression of piracy on land even on foreign soil, could be presented as a natural extension of the commonly accepted practice of policing of the seas rather than as a military intervention.89 The punitive expeditions against the Saribas and Sekrang Dayaks took place in a grey area between upholding the law and conducting war. The inconclusiveness of the Commissioners’ report and its vague and, at times, opaque modes of expression reflect this fundamental ambiguity.90

Today, an attempt like Brooke’s combat of pirates might be described as a ‘war on piracy’ with all the conceptual contradictions and political opportunism this anachronistic
expression suggests. The arguments invoked in the debates about Brooke and his actions could equally apply to the twenty first century debates on the ‘Responsibility to Protect’.91

The decision by the United States President George Bush to invade Iraq in 2003, or the arguments for military intervention in Syria that still occur as this is written in 2018, are reminiscent of the nineteenth century debates on James Brooke’s actions in Sarawak.

Brooke represented (and still represents) a contradiction within the liberal philosophy of intervention that continues today.

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2 For a global contextualization of Brooke’s venture, its receptions and the ways in which he served as a role model for later adventurers and private enterprises right up to the “scramble for Africa” during the 1880s, see Steven Press, Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe’s Scramble for Africa, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp.11-51.
4 For example, in a co-written article James August St. John and Horace St John concluded that “The suppression of piracy is a ‘to extirpate piracy from the eastern seas is Mr. Brooke’s principle object’” Dublin uni mag. May 1848 p. 657
5 Louis Alexis Chamerovzow, ‘Raja Brooke and the Borneo Massacre’ The Colonial Intelligencer; or, Aborigines’ Friend, Vol. 2. No. 21, p. 368
7 Jürgen Osterhammel, Europe, the “West” and the Civilizing Mission. The 2005 Annual Lecture, The German Historical Institute, London, p.16.
13 As he mentioned in his draft ‘Mr. Brooke’s Expedition to Borneo’ in 1838, before venturing out to Asia. (Printed in Brooke & Templer, The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke, K.C. B Rajah of Sarawak., vol. 1, pp.2-33; see esp. pp.19-20) These humanitarian and political considerations were, however, left out in the much shorter version originally published in The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society (pp.443-448, Vol.8, 1838)
15 Ibid p. 12
16 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 23.
17 In a letter dated November 10, 1841 and addressed to his friend and later editor, John Templer, Brooke thus explicitly referred to the work of these authors as authoritative and essential for his own work. ibid., pp.125-128.
18 In tracing the origin of the indigenous parts in the Malay language, Marsden in 1812 similarly used the term in the sense of ‘originality as far as we can venture to apply the term, which signifies no more than the state

19 For a thoughtful discussion of the global contexts of the emergence of the idea of the native (or aboriginal) and its inherent conceptual binaries, see pp.259–265 in Jon E. Wilson, *Agency, Narrative, and Resistance*. In Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*. (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp.245-268. Wilson here argues that the notions of ‘native’ both conceptually and historically depended on the forces of global interconnection and in particular on the imperial enterprise. Hence the ‘of “native” territory as the dwelling place of one particular type of person involves a reduction – or confinement – of complex and heterogenous histories of global interaction and colonial encounter to a straightforward opposition between two pre-constituted entities, the native and the alien.’ (261) The alien was in the case of Borneo discursively construed by Brooke at al not as the British coloniser but as previous intruders such as the Malays.

20 ‘Outline of a Proposed Code’ *The colonial Intelligencer; or, Aborigines’ Friend*, No. 1, March 1847, p. 22


23 Ibid., p. 177

24 Brooke was born and spent his earliest childhood in India where his father, Thomas Brooke, was employed in EIC service. Brooke was thus intimately acquainted with this system of indirect rule based on orientalist knowledge, and ‘where policies were developed to win over suspicious populations and avoid violent dissent, and where consideration was given to presenting authority in forms familiar to the population governed’ as emphasised by Walker, *Power and Prowess*, p.32.


28 Borneo 1844 to 1846, *Colonial Office*, CO 144/1, United Kingdom National Archives, p. 179.

29 Ibid. p. 191a.

30 Borneo 1844 to 1846, pp. 181-99

31 ‘Outline of a Proposed Code’ *The colonial Intelligencer; or, Aborigines’ Friend*, No. 1, March 1847, p. 23–4


33 Brooke, *Memorandum*, p. 191 but also Keppel, *The expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the suppression of piracy: with extracts from the journal of James Brooke*, vol. 2, p. 144, vol. 2, p. 152 It is worth noting that if such an action was taken today it would be a clear war crime and the enforced dispersal of people and the destruction of their homes would constitute an act of genocide.


35 On the discursive procedures involved in transforming the traditionally individual crime of piracy into a collective delinquency ascribed to entire communities, ethnic groupings or races, as well as its epistemic preconditions and ideological implications, see Martin Müller, *Embodying Piracy, Textualizing the Piratical Body: Defining, Combating, and Punishing Southeast Asian ‘Piratical Communities’ in British Discourse and
Colonialism and Colonial History is identified as the author in (University of Exeter Press, 2016).  


50 It was the renowned East India Company paddle steamer Nemesis that, under the orders of commander Farquhar, had been deployed in the actions at Bating Maru. For more on the fate of this vessel, see Adrian G. Marshall, Nemesis: The First Iron Warship and Her World, (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2016) – the battle is covered on pp.208-215.  

51 Ibid.  


53 Cobden, ‘Raja Brooke and the Bornean massacre’, (December 8, 1849).  


56 Chamerovzov, ‘Raja Brooke and the Borneo Massacre’ p. 337.  

57 Vicken Babkenian and Peter Stanley, Armenia Australia and the Great War Sydney New South 2016  

58 Chamerovzov, ‘Raja Brooke and the Borneo Massacre’ p. 337.  


60 A notable exception was Alfred Gliddon, Trade and Piracy in the Eastern Archipelago. Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review, 25 (July 1851), pp.49-64.


Ibid., p.147.


here it was precisely Brooke’s uses of the definition of piracy to unleash violent punitive expeditions that was called into question. To this, further ambiguity was added later on the same page, when Prinsep first emphasised that ‘there was distinct evidence of threats or attempts of piratical attack on vessels of the subjects of European Settlements and their property, which justified the suppression by European Powers of these tribes as piratical hordes’. Shortly after he then pointed out that ‘the attacks on these piratical tribes, both by Captain Keppel and Captain Farquhar, were prompted rather by consideration for the injuries sustained from them by the inhabitants of Sarawak, than by any injuries, or complaints of injuries, sustained by British subjects’, and the subsequent ‘barbarities of uncivilized warfare’ were ‘much to be lamented, as having taken place in operations effected at the suggestion of a Representative of Great Britain, and by and under the command of British officers.’ (pp.4-5)

91 The Responsibility to Protect (R2P or RtoP) is a global political commitment, endorsed by all member states of the United Nations at the 2005 World Summit, with the aim of preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.